

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-36. (Canceled)

37. (Previously presented) A method, comprising:

receiving a search query comprising a plurality of search terms from a user, wherein the search query includes at least one user-selected operator associated with a first one of the search terms of the search query;

broadening the first one of the search terms based on the at least one user-selected operator to produce a broadened search query; and

executing a search using the broadened search query.

38. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the search query further includes a user-selected delimiter associated with a second one of the search terms that indicates that the second one of the search terms should not be broadened.

39. (Previously presented) A method, comprising:

receiving a search query comprising a plurality of search terms;

broadening one of the plurality of search terms;

excluding the broadened one of the plurality of search terms from the search query;

executing a search based on the search query to provide search results; and

evaluating the search results relative to the excluded search term using categorical or clustered distinctions.

40. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

determining a meaning associated with the first one of the search terms.

41. (Previously presented) The method of claim 40, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

determining a related concept based on the meaning.

42. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

modifying, replacing, supplementing, removing or restating the first one of the search terms.

43. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

selecting a broadening search term associated with the first one of the search terms from a set of words having a synonymous, alternate spelling, common root, or similar semantic meaning.

44. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

presenting at least one broadened search term associated with the first one of the search terms as at least one of a static list, a menu of selectable search terms, a set of checkboxes or a list of selectable search terms; and

receiving a selection from the presented at least broadened search term from the user.

45. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

presenting at least one broadened search characteristic associated with the first one of the search terms as a hyperlink; and

forming the broadened search query responsive to a selection of the hyperlink by the user.

46. (Previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the at least one user-selected operator comprises a plurality of operators, wherein the plurality of operators comprise a same operator repeated multiple times.

47. (Previously presented) The method of claim 46, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms based on the at least one user-selected operator to produce a broadened search query comprises:

broadening the first one of the search terms to an extent determined by a number of times the same operator is repeated in the at least one user-selected operator.

48. (Previously presented) A method, comprising:

receiving a first search query comprising a plurality of terms;
excluding a first term of the plurality of terms from the first search query to produce a second search query;
executing a first search based on the second search query to retrieve first search results;
mapping the first search results into related terms that are associated with the first term;
and
executing a second search based on a third search query that includes the plurality of terms and the related terms to retrieve second search results.

49. (Currently amended) A method, comprising:

receiving a search query comprising a plurality of search terms from a user, where
~~wherein~~ the search query includes at least one first symbol which defines a user-assigned
strength of broadening associated with a first one of the search terms of the search query;
broadening the first one of the search terms to an extent determined by the user-assigned
strength to produce a broadened search query; and
executing a search based on the broadened search query.

50. (Currently amended) The method of claim 49, ~~wherein~~ where the at least one first symbol
~~the user assigned strength~~ includes multiple symbols ~~operators~~ and ~~wherein~~ where a number of
the multiple symbols ~~operators~~ determine the extent to which the first one of the search terms is
broadened.

51. (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the search query further includes
a user-selected delimiter associated with a second one of the search terms that indicates that the
second one of the search terms should not be broadened.

52. (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein broadening the first one of the
search terms comprises:

determining a meaning associated with the first one of the search terms.

53. (Previously presented) The method of claim 52, wherein broadening the first one of the
search terms comprises:

determining a related concept based on the meaning.

54. (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein broadening the first one of the
search terms comprises:

modifying, replacing, supplementing, removing or restating the first one of the search
terms.

55. (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

selecting a broadening search term associated with the first one of the search terms from a set of words having a synonymous, alternate spelling, common root, or similar semantic meaning.

56. (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

presenting at least one broadened search term associated with the first one of the search terms as at least one of a static list, a menu of selectable search terms, a set of checkboxes or a list of selectable search terms; and

receiving a selection from the presented at least broadened search term from the user.

57. (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein broadening the first one of the search terms comprises:

presenting at least one broadened search characteristic associated with the first one of the search terms as a hyperlink; and

forming the broadened search query responsive to a selection of the hyperlink by the user.

58. (New) The method of claim 37, where the at least one user-selected operator comprises a first symbol that represents search term broadening.

59. (New) The method of claim 58, where the first symbol comprises one of a graphical or character symbol.

60. (New) The method of claim 58, where the search query further includes a user-selected delimiter associated with a second one of the search terms that indicates that the second one of the search terms should not be broadened and where the user-selected delimiter comprises a second symbol that is different than the first symbol.

61. (New) The method of claim 58, where the at least one user-selected operator comprises a plurality of operators and where the plurality of operators comprise the first symbol repeated multiple times.

62. (New) The method of claim 61, where broadening the first one of the search terms based on the at least one user-selected operator to produce a broadened search query comprises:

broadening the first one of the search terms to an extent determined by a number of times the first symbol is repeated.

63. (New) The method of claim 49, where the first symbol comprises one of a graphical or character symbol.

64. (New) The method of claim 51, where the user-selected delimiter comprises a second symbol that is different than the first symbol.

65. (New) A system, comprising:

means for receiving a search query comprising a plurality of search terms from a user, where the search query includes at least one user-selected operator associated with one of the search terms of the search query and where the at least one user-selected operator comprises a first symbol that represents search term broadening;

means for broadening the one of the search terms based on the at least one user-selected operator to produce a broadened search query; and

means for executing a search using the broadened search query.

66. (New) The system of claim 65, where the first symbol comprises one of a graphical or character symbol.

67. (New) The system of claim 65, where the search query further includes a user-selected delimiter associated with another of the search terms that indicates that the other of the search terms should not be broadened.

68. (New) The system of claim 67, where the user-selected delimiter comprises a second symbol that is different than the first symbol.

69. (New) The system of claim 65, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms includes:

means for determining a meaning associated with the one of the search terms.

70. (New) The system of claim 69, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms includes:

means for determining a related concept based on the meaning.

71. (New) The system of claim 65, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms includes:

means for modifying, replacing, supplementing, removing or restating the one of the search terms.

72. (New) The system of claim 65, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms includes:

means for selecting a broadening search term associated with the one of the search terms from a set of words having a synonymous, alternate spelling, common root, or similar semantic meaning.

73. (New) The system of claim 65, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms includes:

means for presenting at least one broadened search term associated with the one of the search terms as at least one of a static list, a menu of selectable search terms, a set of checkboxes or a list of selectable search terms; and

means for receiving a selection from the presented at least broadened search term from the user.

74. (New) The system of claim 65, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms includes:

means for presenting at least one broadened search characteristic associated with the one of the search terms as a hyperlink; and

means for forming the broadened search query responsive to a selection of the hyperlink by the user.

75. (New) The system of claim 65, where the at least one user-selected operator comprises multiple ones of the first symbol.

76. (New) The system of claim 75, where the means for broadening the one of the search terms based on the at least one user-selected operator to produce a broadened search query includes:

means for broadening the one of the search terms to an extent determined by a number of the multiple ones of the first symbol.